

Talk Yourself Out of Stress

By Bruno Cortis, M.D.

Seventy-five percent of all our problems - both emotional and physical problems - come from the same source. If you could identify that source, would you want to eliminate it?

For most people, the answer is obvious. Unfortunately, few people are able to identify the core of their problems. And those who do typically don't know the steps to take to alleviate their challenges.

So what is the cause of most of our problems? It is stress. That's right; stress is the source of 75 percent of all our problems and a major epidemic in people's lives. Finding ways to control stress is vital, because if you don't control stress, it will control you.

What Exactly Is Stress?

The concept of stress isn't new to anyone. But few people truly know what stress is. Physical stress is the depletion of the body's resources by illness or exhaustion. The most devastating stress, however, is psychological and emotional stress. There are many sources of emotional stress: family problems, social obligations, life changes, work, decision making, phobias, etc.

Emotional stress is powerful and debilitating because it takes away any sense of control we have over our lives. And this feeling of control over our environment and our self is one of our most basic human needs. If it isn't met, emotional or physical illness can result. For example, a number of studies directly link stress and heart disease.

The only way to combat stress and stay healthy is to create a complete physical, mental and spiritual equilibrium within the body. Although we used to believe that the mind and body are two separate entities, we now know that all facets of our being are interconnected. Everything that happens to your body and your mind affects your health and stress level in some way. Every thought you have, every feeling and emotion you experience affects your longevity. That is why you must take a total body approach to eliminate stress and balance your life.

Physical And Emotional Stress Relief

If you want to reduce your stress level and live a happier and healthier life, use the physical and emotional stress relief techniques outlined below.

- Physical Relief
 - Say No: The pressure to perform in today's world is intense. As a result, people work long hours and take on much more than they can bear. They juggle multiple roles throughout the day and sacrifice sleep or personal time just so they can get everything done. Saying "no" to a demand is out of the question, resulting in increased stress, both at work and at home.

Unfortunately, for most people, saying "no" to another's request is a challenge. They are anxious to please others, so they put their own needs aside. They fail to realize that no one can be on call 24 hours a day, and that we all need some personal time to rest and rejuvenate.

The next time someone demands more than you can give, remember that you have to take care of yourself first. You simply can't handle everything. Say "no" gracefully while respecting the other person and letting him or her know that you care. While you may feel some initial guilt for denying the request that feeling will quickly pass and your stress level diminishes.

- Listen to Your Body: Listening to your body helps you take control of your stress because you become aware of the signals your body gives you regarding comfort and discomfort. Once you're attuned to what your body is telling you, you can learn which events trigger stress and which events reduce it. Your body talks to you everyday. How often do you listen?

The most common warning of too much stress is a condition called angina. Angina consists of chest pain or tightness in the neck, arms, jaw, and upper back that is the result of a reduced blood supply to the heart. Other indicators of excessive emotional stress are arrhythmias or irregular heartbeat.

In order to listen to your body, you must become responsible for your health and your stress. Having trust in your doctors or in medical tests is now enough. The real solution lies with you and with your own awareness and responsibility for your health. This responsibility may involve doing some things that are difficult for you, such as changing your diet, stopping smoking, learning to control emotions, etc. Whatever change is necessary for you, your body will tell you. You need only to listen.

- Emotional Relief

- Communicate With Your Heart: Your heart has an important job, pumping 2,000 gallons of blood throughout your body each day. This merits the heart receiving your attention. To reduce emotional stress your heart needs encouragement, appreciation, and love.

Start your heart talk, your communication with your heart, by placing your right hand over the left side of your chest. Become aware of your heartbeat. Stay in that position for a few moments. Soon you'll notice that the heating sensation becomes less forceful. It is as if your heart knows that you're in touch with it. With your hand still over your chest ask your heart to help you be peaceful. Ask your heart to create an emotional shield that protects you from whatever the world around you may be fighting with.

Within your heart is an infinite intelligence that is sensitive to your needs.

So pose a question to your heart or discuss a problem that's causing you stress. Your heart will reciprocate with the proper answer. By doing this, you are telling your creative mind to quiet down so you can uncover new solutions to your problems. The more you become aware of your heart and what it tells you to do, the less stress you will experience. You will achieve a sense of peace and calmness knowing that you are doing what is best for you.

- Clear Out the Past Clutter: Just as you do a spring cleaning of your house, you should also do a spring cleaning of your heart to wipe away the old memories and messages that are causing you stress. This is important, because the way we feel from moment to moment, the way we behave, and the actions we take are all conditioned to how we feel inside.

Negative feelings that we harbor from our past - feelings of loneliness, feelings of low self-worth, feelings of sadness, worry, and fear - cause a great deal of emotional stress in our adult lives. It's similar to carrying a weight on your back. The weight becomes heavier and heavier. You eventually have to walk bent over because the weight is excessive, but you are still not willing to let it go. As you clear out the chatter, you let go of the weight; you regain a sense of peace and are able to walk upright again.

To discover the past chatter that's causing you stress, think back over your life and identify the most painful experience you have had - the one you thought you needed to hide from the world. What was that mistake or event? What message did the event trigger in your mind? Acknowledge the event, forgive yourself for it, and then release it and the accompanying stress from your heart.

Stress-Free Today

If you want to eliminate 75 percent of your physical and emotional problems, you must first reduce the stress you feel in your life. By practicing the self-communication strategies explained above, you can take the steps to talk yourself out of daily stress. When you do, you'll gain a sense of balance and inner peace that enables you to accomplish more, enjoy life, and live your dreams.